

Stratford-upon-Avon College

Unique reference number: 130837

Name of lead inspector: William Baidoe-Ansah HMI

Last day of inspection: 2 March 2012

Type of provider: General further education college

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Information about the provider

1. Stratford-upon-Avon College is a medium-sized general further education college serving South Warwickshire. The college has about 1,600 learners aged 16 to 18, mostly on full-time courses at advanced level, of whom approximately 300 are enrolled on at least one GCE AS or A2 level. There are also about 5,000 adult learners, predominantly on part-time courses. About two-thirds of full-time learners are on advanced-level courses, 80% of whom are on vocational courses with the remainder taking AS and A-level courses. Arts, media and publishing is the largest subject area, making up 20% of the provision. In 2010/11, the college provided for over 200 apprenticeships and over 700 Train to Gain learners. It also has provision for over 200 school pupils aged 14 to 16. Across most of the college's catchment area, GCSE results are much higher than the national average. The last college inspection, in April 2007, judged all key aspects as good. The college's mission is 'to provide high quality learning opportunities for all stakeholders to enable full participation in active economic, social and community life'.

Overall inspection summary of Stratford-upon-Avon College

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 3
Outcomes for learners	Grade 3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade 3
<i>Performing arts</i>	<i>Grade 1</i>
<i>Humanities and social sciences</i>	<i>Grade 4</i>
<i>Literacy and numeracy</i>	<i>Grade 3</i>
<i>Business, administration and law</i>	<i>Grade 4</i>
Leadership and management	Grade 3

2. The college's satisfactory overall effectiveness masks wide variations in the quality of provision. On the one hand, a significant minority of learners have access to outstanding learning in performing arts and hospitality and catering. Learners in these areas can expect to develop the knowledge and specialist skills that will enable them to produce work of high professional standards, and equip and prepare them well for employment in demanding industries. The small numbers of learners aged 14 to 16 achieve outstanding success rates. However, across much of the rest of the college learners have satisfactory success. Learners on foundation and intermediate courses generally succeed in line with national averages. However, the majority of learners on advanced programmes succeed below the average, particularly those taking AS levels, which accounts for some poor results in humanities, social sciences and business, administration and law. Work-based learning success rates are satisfactory overall, with better

success in health and social care and weaker success in engineering and construction.

3. The variations in performance across the college are mirrored in the quality of teaching and learning. In the better lessons, teachers plan well to inspire and challenge learners to develop the technical and specialist skills to produce work of a high standard. They know their learners well and plan activities to suit their individual needs. They use feedback particularly well to encourage learners' reflection and critical evaluation, which supports their rapid progress. However, too many lessons are characterised by slow pace and poor planning with learners often progressing at a comfortable pace and not challenged to explore issues in any depth. Consequently, learners become disengaged and make slow progress. Some theory-based lessons in both work-based learning and vocational courses suffer similarly. Learners' English and mathematics skills are developed adequately and feedback on assessed work is satisfactory.
4. Senior managers are aware of the discrepancies across the college and have recently made changes to staffing and the management structure of the college to remedy inconsistent performance. Changes to aspects of support arrangements, for example with the appointment of new learning mentors, are beginning to lead to improvements. However, there is insufficient sharing of practice from the excellent practice in some areas to the rest of the college. The predominantly satisfactory teaching and learning is not being improved sufficiently by the observation system, which results in over-generous judgements and leads to weak action planning. The self-assessment report is also overly optimistic and not sufficiently self-critical. Equality and diversity are monitored well at whole college level, but are not actively promoted across the entire curriculum. Learners are adequately involved in improvement planning and both parents and employers are positive about the college.

Main inspection report

Key findings

- Success rates for learners on advanced vocational courses are broadly in line with averages, but they are below for AS programmes. Learners on foundation and intermediate courses make reasonable progress. However, most learners on advanced courses do not achieve in line with expectations based on their prior qualifications.
- The wide range of courses in performing arts, music and media meets learners' interests very well. Learners in performing arts develop excellent professional skills and work-based learners develop good practical skills.
- Work-based learning is satisfactory overall. Good teaching and assessment support high success rates in childcare and health and social care. However,

poor assessment and reviews, particularly in engineering, have prevented learners from achieving within the planned timescale.

- The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in most subjects and outstanding in performing arts. The large majority of learners make satisfactory progress in their learning, although too many weaknesses in teaching in a few subjects mean that a minority of learners do not make enough progress and drop out of their courses. These weaknesses include ineffective formative assessment and weak questioning techniques.
- High-quality resources and skilled specialist staff promote learning well in a few well-established subjects but learning in other subjects is much less engaging because teachers do not use strategies that motivate and challenge learners. Teachers do not consistently have high enough expectations of learners and do not always emphasise the importance of high quality writing.
- The college's view of the quality of lessons is over-generous, as lesson observers do not assess the progress learners make sufficiently well. Consequently, actions to improve the quality of teaching and learning are sometimes not identified.
- Arrangements for monitoring course performance are adequate and pay more frequent attention to underperforming courses. The strengths and issues identified at review meetings are too general to inform improvement planning fully. As a result, self-assessment judgements are sometimes over-generous; for example, in business, humanities and social sciences. However, actions by leaders and managers to improve poor performance are beginning to have a positive impact in most curriculum areas.

What does Stratford-upon-Avon College need to do to improve further?

- Share the good practice that exists, in a few subjects, in motivating and engaging learners through the use of integrated and interesting assessment practices. Support teachers to have high expectations of learners and ensure that they emphasise the importance of high quality writing and correct spelling, grammar and punctuation to learners.
- Help teachers to use formative assessment more effectively across learning activities, particularly to gauge the extent of learners' understanding and monitor their progress. Develop teachers' questioning technique so that questions engage all groups of learners, are well matched to ability levels, and are frequently demanding.
- Increase the rigour and effectiveness of the lesson observation process by introducing more substantial moderation arrangements and developing observers' practice in producing consistently helpful and sharply focused

action plans for teachers. Continue to emphasise the significance of evaluating the impact of teaching on learning with observers and teachers alike.

- Be more self-critical about learners' outcomes and the quality of teaching and learning in self-assessment, and use a wider range of information, such as for different groups of learners, to ensure that both the strengths and areas for improvement are identified more clearly and accurately at course level.
- Ensure that targets, at college and course level, and improvement actions are challenging, detailed and measurable so that leaders and managers can better assess progress in improving underperforming courses at a faster rate.
- Increase work-based learners' chances of completing their courses within the time allowed by ensuring that individual learners' targets are more specific, and that the planning of assessments is timely and responsive to their assessment needs.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

5. Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. In 2010/11, around three quarters of all learners who started long qualifications completed them successfully. This was an improvement on the previous year, but remains below the national average. Success rates for all learners on foundation courses improved markedly in 2010/11 and are above averages. Success rates for all learners on intermediate courses also improved in that year but remain below averages.
6. Success rates for the substantial proportion of learners aged 16 to 18 on advanced courses increased marginally in 2010/11 but remained below the national average. Learners on AS-level programmes perform below average but succeed if they progress to A level. However, the proportion of learners gaining high grades for both AS and A2 courses has declined over the past three years and is now well below comparable averages. Success rates for learners on advanced vocational programmes are around the national average. However, the number of learners completing advanced programmes, particularly over two years, was low in 2010/11. College action is beginning to result in improvements on two-year programmes but it is too early to gauge the impact on other courses. Most learners enter the college with good GCSE grades but generally achieve less well than expected given their prior qualifications.
7. Female learners consistently achieve higher success rates than males. The gap has diminished slightly over the past three years for learners aged 16 to 18 to 6 percentage points, but it has widened for adults to 10 percentage points. The number of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds is low. Most learners achieve in line with the college average although there are some minor exceptions. Those learners who take up the offer of additional learning support succeed significantly better than the college average.

8. Success rates for learners aged 14 to 16 are very high. Learners' results in functional skills are satisfactory. In most subject areas, learners achieve less well than average. Success rates for subject areas differ markedly. For example, around 90% of hospitality and catering learners succeeded compared to only 67% of health, public services and care learners.
9. Success rates in work-based learning provision improved significantly in 2010/11 and are satisfactory. Learners on these programmes have good access to high quality workplace experience and develop good vocational and employability skills. Learners in performing arts develop high levels of specialist skills and their excellent professional practice equips them well for employment. However, learners in business studies would benefit from more frequent opportunities to apply the skills they gain within business contexts.
10. Most learners enter courses with the requisite literacy and numeracy skills. The college has appropriate strategies to meet the support needs of other learners. Work is generally well marked with spelling and grammar appropriately corrected. Progression within the college is generally satisfactory and learners progress well to higher education. However, the college is aware of the need to improve the capture of other destination data.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Grade 3

11. The majority of teaching in the college is satisfactory and leads to most learners making adequate progress in their learning. In two of the largest and well-established subject areas, performing arts and hospitality and catering, teaching is much more effective and learners often make good or better progress. However, in most AS-level provision and in several smaller subject areas, too many learners receive uninspiring and unchallenging teaching. In these areas, drop-out rates are high and progression rates to further study are often low. The college is tackling these weaknesses by establishing more stable teaching teams in most subject areas, ensuring greater support for teachers to improve their practice, and by targetting academic support for at-risk learners. Improved advice and guidance ensure that learners are made aware of the demands and content of courses to increase their chances of success.
12. Where teaching and learning are most effective, learners are motivated, see real purpose and challenge in their activities and learn specialist and other skills quickly due to a combination of highly skilled teachers, exciting and stimulating learning environments and strong links with industry. Teachers maximise real life opportunities such as the college's restaurant, or artistic performances to full audiences, to help learners complete their work projects successfully. Learners use these specialist teachers as role models, benefit from their industrial credibility and thrive on the strategies they use to promote learning. Learners in these lessons are challenged to work independently, grow in confidence and produce high standards of work that are often a close match to professional requirements. Assessment practice is often highly effective because learners'

work brings together different aspects of their study in a relevant, coherent and interesting way.

13. In too many other lessons, however, while teachers are highly committed to supporting learners, they do not consistently inspire or engage them all. Learners tend to be helped too much because teachers provide answers and solutions rather than making learners think for themselves. While learners are mostly cooperative and work well together, a tendency towards passivity is often tolerated by teachers. Quite often, particularly in theory lessons, learners' understanding of key learning points is insufficiently consolidated because teachers do not assess how well learners are progressing during lessons effectively enough and move too quickly through demonstrations or explanations. Questions are often not sufficiently probing and are not targeted to provide challenge and extend learning, particularly for more able learners. Assessments are often too bland and undemanding and fail to capture learners' interest.
14. Teachers' and learners' use of technology to support learning varies across subjects. A minority of learners use 'Learn Zone', the college's virtual learning environment, extensively and constructively because of the wide range of additional learning materials held there. More frequently, learners use it because it is a repository for materials covered in lessons, which supports their study rather than advancing their learning substantially.
15. The college has made recent changes to the provision of personal support to increase the number of learners who successfully complete their courses. New learning mentors have a specific role to monitor and review learners' progress and intervene promptly where needed. There are signs of increased retention rates in several subjects but it is too early in the academic year to judge the full impact of mentors' work. Subject teachers also have a role in monitoring progress and setting meaningful targets for learners. However, some learners are not set sufficiently challenging or aspirational targets.
16. Learners' basic skills are developed satisfactorily. However, not all teachers ensure that functional skills in mathematics and English are applied in their subjects. The college identifies learners' additional learning needs promptly and provides highly effective support which ensures that those who receive support are much more successful than their peers. Particular care is taken to assess reading skills and provide extra support where needed. While the quality of marking and feedback is generally good, sometimes too little attention is paid to developing learners' writing skills including their use of correct spelling, punctuation and grammar.
17. Teachers use their vocational expertise well to engage work-based learners who acquire good practical skills and produce mostly high standards of work. However, the progress they make in theory learning is less effective. The teaching is often less stimulating and engaging, over-directed by the teacher and makes insufficient use of information and learning technology (ILT). Learners often benefit from high quality and interesting workplace learning experiences.

For example, apprentices are closely involved in running the Tourist Information Centre in the centre of Stratford-upon-Avon where they learn valuable skills in customer service. However, in several subjects, including engineering and construction, weaknesses in target setting and in the scheduling of assessments mean that some learners do not complete their programmes of study within the time allowed. Employers trust and have a good opinion of the college.

18. Equality and diversity topics are covered comprehensively in the tutorial programme and there are a number of activities, such as a 'One World Week', which help develop a culture of mutual respect and understanding of cultural diversity. However, opportunities to promote equality and diversity in the classroom are not consistently well used. These themes are poorly covered and rarely reinforced in employment-based training.

Performing arts

Grade 1

19. Teaching in performing arts and music focuses on developing skilled, creative learners who are self-motivated, take responsibility for their own learning and are capable of working collaboratively. In the vast majority of sessions, teaching inspires learners to produce practical work of a very high quality, and for second-year learners, professional standards of work. This is reflected in the success rates that learners achieve on both vocational and academic courses, which in many cases are significantly above the national rates.
20. The selection process is extremely thorough and reflects professional practice. Learners are auditioned and interviewed and are placed on the right level of course. Well-qualified teachers plan learning very effectively and ensure that they engage and motivate learners through work that is interesting and challenging and which effectively builds and develops their subject specialist and personal skills.
21. Highly challenging integrated assignments successfully develop learners' professional, personal and employability skills. The production *Musicals Rock* involved nearly a hundred music technology, music practice, musical theatre and technical theatre learners all working collaboratively to produce work of an exceptional standard under very rigorous conditions. Dancers, choreographers, actors and directors working on a range of final projects show how well their specialist skills have developed. In each rehearsal, the progress that learners had made was evident as they refined ideas and polished performances.
22. Feedback on performance is a very strong feature of lessons. Learners receive regular, detailed, supportive and developmental feedback from their teachers and peers. They are encouraged to critically evaluate themselves using the appropriate terminology. For instance, dancers might refer to dynamic content, spatial awareness or motif development when evaluating their work. Written feedback on assessed work is thorough and detailed and clearly identifies what learners need to do to improve.

23. Learners appreciate the excellent specialist accommodation and resources available to them. Dance and drama studios are spacious, and have sprung floors, mirrors and lighting rigs. Music studios contain excellent computer equipment and there are sufficient well-equipped music studios and practice rooms to which learners have access both in and outside of lesson times.
24. A full and varied range of excellent curriculum enrichment activities serve to broaden learners' experience and widen horizons. During the inspection, a group of music learners spent two and a half days working at a local recording studio. All agreed that it had been a highly beneficial experience and had taught them a great deal about professional practice. Learners have the opportunity to work with professional practitioners on a regular basis so they gain a real knowledge of the demands of working in the industry.
25. Provision is highly inclusive. Teachers work well with a wide range of learners, some with disabilities, who are fully integrated into the work. Teachers know their learners well and plan activities to ensure that individual needs are met. Learners are involved in a wide range of planned activities that celebrate cultural difference. Staff and learners work with outside agencies to promote equality and diversity in the community. Equality and diversity issues are a strong feature of the tutorial programme and learning mentors are effective in discussing a range of issues such as sexual orientation, bullying, and stereotyping with learners.
26. Teachers ensure that learners' work is marked well, correcting spelling and grammar as necessary. A-level teachers have completely revised their approach to developing essay-writing skills, which has been an issue in learner achievement in the past. This has had a very positive impact on the quality of current learners' work.

Humanities and social sciences

Grade 4

27. Overall teaching, learning and assessment are inadequate. However, significant variation in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment exists within individual subject areas. Most learners on AS-level programmes make slow progress due to weak teaching, learning and assessment, and this accurately reflects the poor outcomes and progression to their A-level study and intended destinations.
28. In too many lessons the pace and challenge of learning fails to stretch the more able learners and does not prepare them for future advanced or higher education. Teachers do not develop learners' independent learning skills sufficiently, with most of them moving at the same slow pace of learning. Learners at times lose interest and become disengaged from their studies. Teachers often miss opportunities to extend learning, for example, by linking issues to current relevant and topical issues in politics and to the learners' personal experiences in sociology. In too many lessons, learners develop their personal and study skills at a slow pace. More able learners do use the correct

terminology and language within their chosen subject area. Less able learners fail to develop such skills to a successful level that will enable them to achieve and progress. These learners are not confident when using or discussing subject-specific terminology and concepts.

29. In the smaller number of better lessons, planning supports and develops individual learning and a wide range of resources and activities are used to interest and motivate learners. Learners are engaged and participate with enthusiasm. Learning resources and information technology are used effectively to enhance and stimulate learning. Learners are also encouraged to develop individual learning through electronic resources on the college intranet. Learners demonstrate effective literacy and numeracy skills when analysing text documents and research data and this reflects the entry requirement for their course of a GCSE pass in English and mathematics.
30. Assessment within most lessons is too often underdeveloped and a lack of sufficient checks on learning results in a failure to monitor learners' progress effectively. In most lessons, teachers do not use systematic and targeted questioning to test learners' knowledge and understanding. Learners then fall behind because they lack sufficient understanding of a given topic. Assessment on homework assignments and essays is usually more supportive and enables learners to progress and develop. In the best cases, learners are encouraged to self-assess against marking criteria from awarding bodies and their observations are then cross-marked with those of the teacher.
31. The use of target setting to support and inspire learners' progress is underdeveloped. The college initially assesses all learners and gives them minimum target grades to help measure and assess their progress. Some teachers set additional aspirational targets, though this practice is not consistent. However, many learners remain unaware of their target grades and their progress in achieving these. For a few learners grades are set too low and do not enable them to progress, even if achieved.
32. Tutorials promote equality and diversity well by exploring differences and the need for tolerance and respect. They are also positively promoted at appropriate points on the syllabus within most of the subject areas. Support for learners from underperforming groups remains underdeveloped as this evidence is not gathered at course level.
33. The newly-established learning mentors provide effective support for learners, and this focuses well on retention, attendance and punctuality. Learners value this support although guidance on progress against targets is not always clear or presented by subject on their termly reviews.

34. Teaching, learning and assessment in literacy and numeracy functional skills are satisfactory, which reflects learners' outcomes over time. The quality of teaching and learning observed during inspection was satisfactory or better.
35. In the best lessons, teachers' thorough planning takes good account of the results of learners' initial assessments to devise challenging group tasks that meet the wide range of individual needs. Teachers use a broad range of strategies and resources to motivate and engage most learners, many of whom have previously found English and mathematics difficult or unrewarding. Lessons are well paced and challenging. In English classes, learners enjoy and benefit from group discussions, making presentations and engaging in role-play. They report significant improvement in their confidence and personal skills. In entry level mathematics lessons learners enjoy and learn effectively from practical tasks. Learners benefit from appropriate use of technology in class and many also access high-quality handouts and learning support materials from the college's virtual learning environment. Equality and diversity are promoted in lessons when the opportunity arises. Staff are knowledgeable and experienced in their subject areas, although not all are confident in dealing with the age group that they are timetabled to teach.
36. The less successful features of sessions include a lack of clear guidance given by teachers when setting tasks, resulting in learners being confused about what they need to do, or why. Teachers do not always remind learners of how the skills they are acquiring, such as participating in formal discussions, can be useful in their everyday and working lives. The quality of teaching accommodation is mainly satisfactory, although there are instances of unsuitable classrooms. For example, an English lesson involving discussions took place in an ICT suite, which was too small and unsuited to the small group discussions taking place. Teachers plan most lessons well. However, in a minority of lessons, weak time management led to rushed activities at the end of some lessons.
37. The improvement of writing skills is a particular challenge for learners and is not given a sufficiently high priority. In planning learning programmes, the 'reading' and 'speaking, listening and communication' aspects are often tackled earlier in the year, with 'writing skills' left until later, resulting in too few opportunities to practice and reinforce aspects of writing that learners find difficult. Insufficient time is devoted to writing skills. In addition, the first few classes of the year are often spent on induction and initial assessment activities, reducing the amount of teaching and learning time.
38. The college has devised a new initial assessment process that identifies learners' starting points satisfactorily and ensures that learners are working towards the right level of the qualification. Teachers assess learning well in lessons using direct questioning and examination of written and practical work. Formative assessment, including completion of practice at awarding body assessment papers, is used effectively to measure progress and provide useful feedback to learners on areas for development. Learners' written work is marked promptly, with constructive feedback provided on the content and presentation. Teachers helpfully explain to learners why corrections have been made. However, in

some instances, teachers do not correct spelling errors in marked work. In others, teachers supply correct spellings, rather than encouraging learners to correct their own work to develop their independent study skills.

39. Learners benefit from effective learning support provided by teachers. Learning mentors deliver good weekly tutorial sessions. They provide appropriate pastoral support and deal promptly with any causes for concern relating to attendance and behaviour. They liaise well with parents and external agencies, where appropriate, to maintain good communication and improve learners' chances of succeeding at college.

Business, administration and law

Grade 4

40. The low proportion of learners who complete accountancy, law and business courses is linked to a significant proportion of weak teaching and assessment. Many teachers do not plan effectively to meet learners' individual needs or to ensure that all learners in their group are stretched and challenged with tasks that are matched to their abilities. Most tutors use a narrow range of assessment strategies, mainly consisting of question and answer techniques, to confirm and check learning. This does not allow all learners to demonstrate the extent of their learning, or develop better than satisfactory personal and social skills.
41. A few teachers have underdeveloped classroom management skills and do not deploy strategies to create a workshop or classroom environment where learners can work purposefully. For example, in a few lessons many learners regularly engaged in conversations amongst themselves at the same time as the teacher was addressing the whole group. Too much teacher-led teaching results in learners listening to the teacher for long periods and making notes for too much of the lesson.
42. There is too little use of ILT by most teachers to enhance learning. Most learners are not exposed to the technology and software naturally occurring in many businesses today. Teachers do not have sufficient access to interactive whiteboards and computer technology to enable them to vary their delivery of subject content. Most teachers make extensive use of powerpoint presentations, some of which are uninspiring and of poor quality, to drive lesson content.
43. Links with business and external organisations are underdeveloped. Teachers do not regularly include speakers and visits to organisations to support specific curriculum topics and the few links with businesses do not provide learners with business-related challenges to apply and practise their skills. As a consequence, many learners do not have the opportunity to acquire high levels of proficiency in the practical application of skills and deeper knowledge they need to progress to secure employment, further training or higher education.

44. In the better lessons, teachers interest and engage learners well with practical activities, which help develop their subject knowledge. The pace of these lessons is good and there is mostly effective consolidation of learning by the teacher, building on learners' previous knowledge. These teachers develop learning aspects well for their groups, using real-life examples and contexts to which learners can relate. Learners respond well to this and show good progress. In these lessons, classroom management is good and teachers give clear verbal and written instructions about what the learners need to do next to improve.
45. Most teachers have good subject knowledge and appropriate business-related backgrounds. A few teachers are new to the teaching profession and are still developing their teaching skills and experiences. Some very new and unqualified teachers have significant teaching commitments, with very experienced and well-qualified teachers having smaller roles.
46. Teachers do not routinely embed equality and diversity into the curriculum. Lesson plans do not have sufficient detail about how tasks and activities can support learners' knowledge and understanding. Some teachers regularly miss naturally occurring opportunities within the lesson to develop learners' understanding of equality and diversity aspects.
47. Learners receive good one-to-one support from learning mentors who have recently assumed the role of personal tutor to learners. Once a referral has been made the learning mentor acts very swiftly to follow up the concern by meeting with the learner and agreeing an action plan for improvement. This level of support is proving effective and retention to date is showing an improvement.

The effectiveness of leadership and management Grade 3

48. Leaders, managers and governors set a vision for the college's strategic direction, which reflects local priorities well. The new plans focus appropriately on the educational and learning needs of the community and local businesses, while developing further the popular hospitality and catering and performing arts, music and media provision. Leaders' and managers' track record in improving standards and meeting targets for learner success was successful up to 2009/10, when learners' outcomes declined sharply. During that year, a wide-reaching staff and management restructure took place. This caused considerable disruption to learners' courses, and had an adverse affect on retention. Just under a quarter of the teaching staff have been appointed within the last two years. Eighty-seven percent of teachers are qualified as teachers and the rest are working towards qualifications.
49. Curriculum area managers in the new management structure and college leaders have a strong focus on course performance. They are tackling areas of underperformance appropriately and more rigorously both in the college and for trainees in the workplace. Most college targets were met in 2010/11, except for success rate targets for adults on foundation and intermediate courses and for

learners on AS-level courses. Improvements are evident in most curriculum areas. Leaders and managers recognise there is still much work to do to raise performance further, particularly to ensure lessons are of a consistently good quality and challenge and stretch learners to achieve to their potential. Lesson observation records do not focus sufficiently on the quality of learning and consequently actions arising from observations do not inform development planning sufficiently well. The college's view of the quality of lessons is over-generous.

50. The college offers an appropriate range of vocational courses from foundation to advanced level. The majority of provision for learners aged 16 to 18 is at advanced level, reflecting their above average prior attainment. The GCSE retake programme meets the needs of learners who do not meet the advanced course entry criteria and plans are underway to combine this with vocational qualifications. Partnership arrangements with local sixth forms help broaden the A-level programme to enable subjects such as modern languages to be offered. A wide range of vocational and A-level courses are offered in performing arts, music and media, the college's largest area of provision, which meets learners' interests very well. Apprenticeships meet the local needs appropriately. The college offers provision for pupils at risk of exclusion from school following the recent closure of the Warwickshire Pupil Referral Unit.
51. Actions to improve poor performance are beginning to have a positive impact, such as the improvement in retention on two-year vocational courses. Improvement actions are generally well targeted but are insufficiently detailed. Arrangements for monitoring quality improvements in the college are appropriate but insufficiently frequent, other than for courses identified as a cause for concern. Evaluations of emerging strengths and areas for improvement are too general to inform improvement planning fully. Consequently, links between strategies for learning and poor performance are not always evident and self-assessment judgements are sometimes over-generous, such as in business, humanities and social sciences.
52. Learners are involved effectively in reviewing provision through well-attended learner conferences three times each year. They value the opportunities to share their views with college governors and report that the college listens to, and acts upon, points raised. The new team of learning mentors recruited from September 2011 in response to learners' concerns on the quality of tutorials are proving popular, although it is too early to comment on their impact on learners' outcomes. Where parents' and employers' views have been sought, they are very positive about the college. The college places a high value on ensuring that all learners are safe, and complies fully both with health and safety regulations and with arrangements for ensuring learners are safe from harm in the college and in the workplace.
53. Equality and diversity are promoted appropriately throughout the college. All staff receive training to ensure that they are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Leaders, managers and governors monitor and evaluate the performance of different groups of learners appropriately at whole college level

and are able to identify where gaps in achievement exist. Analysis is not sufficiently detailed at curriculum area level and actions to address issues identified are not sufficiently precise. The promotion of equality and diversity in lessons is inconsistent, which the college recognises. For example, very good practice exists in performing arts where technical equipment such as lighting rigs have been adapted for wheelchair users and learning activities promote cultural differences. However, for work-based learners there is little promotion or follow-up of equality and diversity in learner reviews.

Information about the inspection:

54. Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the college's deputy principal as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the funding body, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
55. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of learners and employers. They also looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed for the college. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the college offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF) Stratford-upon-Avon College

Learning types: 14 – 16 learning programmes: NVQ vocational units; Diplomas; **16-18 learning programmes leading to qualifications:** FE full- and part-time courses; **19+ learning programmes leading to qualifications:** FE full- and part-time courses; **Apprenticeships;** **Other work based learning:** NVQs, access to apprenticeships; **Foundation learning;** **Learning for social and personal development;** adult safeguarded funded learning;

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 Learning programmes	16-18 Learning programmes	19+ Learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Other work based learning	Foundation learning	Learning for social and personal development
Approximate number of enrolled learners at the time of inspection								
Full-time learners			1,324	150	328	269		
Part-time learners		166	200	1,366				
Overall effectiveness	3		3	3	3	3		
Outcomes for learners	3	1	3	3	3	3		
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3		3	3	3	3		
The effectiveness of leadership and management	3		3	3	3	3		
Subject areas graded	Grade	Learner Numbers						
Performing Arts	1		434	16				
Humanities and social sciences	4		212	24				
Literacy and numeracy	3		198	718				
Business Administration and Law	4		141	28				

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